

Prayers, not protest, led 'ISA 6' student to mosque
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A former university student accused of participating in an anti-ISA protest at the National Mosque six years ago told his trial today that he was there for Friday prayers.

"I was there after my classes to attend the Friday prayers," Nik Norhafizi Nik Ibrahim told the Kuala Lumpur magistrate's court today.

He said he was not aware of any protests that was to take place at the mosque on that day, adding that he did not notice anything different at the mosque that day.

However he said that while leaving the mosque after the prayers, he saw police officers nearby the mosque and that the after-prayer crowd was getting restless.

He said he did not see these officers when he entered the mosque.

"Then, I felt my hands being pulled by someone...he then took me to a van. There were six others there in the van," he told the court.

He was then taken to the Dang Wangi police station where a statement was recorded from him. He then spend the night in the police lock-up.

"I don't know why I was arrested. When I was arrested, I was not told the reason by the plainclothes police officer who arrested me," he said.

He added that he was however told the reason for the arrest at the police station.

Norhafizi and the six others - dubbed as the ISA 7 and all university students - were later charged with illegal assembly in connection with a protest rally against the Internal Security Act (ISA) held outside the National Mosque on June 8, 2001.

They were however acquitted by the Kuala Lumpur magistrate's court in April last year but a successful appeal by the prosecutors resulted in the case being referred back to the magistrate's court to be heard at the defence stage.

One defendant discharged

When the re-trial started on Tuesday, the court discharged one of the students without acquitting him as the police could not locate him, the fifth defendant - Wan Mohd Sanusi Wan Mohd Noor.

Norhafizi was the first defendant to take the stand before magistrate Azniza Mohd Ali today.

Lawyers Latheefa Koya, Zulkifli Omar and Amer Hamzah represented Norhafizi and the remaining defendants - Zulkefle Idris, Ahmad Kamal Abdul Hamid, Rafzan Ramli, Herman Samsudeen and Khairul Amal Mahmud.

In his testimony today Norhafizi said that he did not see his co-defendants upon arriving at

the mosque on that day. He added that he did not know them at that time.

He also said that when the police arrested him, the situation outside the mosque was quite chaotic as people were rushing out of the mosque after the prayers.

The trial continues on May 24 with Norhafizi continuing with his testimony.

After their arrest, the students were barred from attending classes by their respective universities - Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UiTM), Universiti Malaya (UM) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. (UKM).

Unable to graduate, the students have since left their university to seek employment.

At the 2001 National Mosque demonstration, several varsity students were protesting against the ISA detention of 10 reformasi leaders, including malaysiakini columnist Hishamuddin Rais.

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